

Northern Virginia Health Care Coalition Overview

Northern Virginia hospitals and their coalition partners, including non-hospital providers, Emergency Management, Fire, EMS, Law Enforcement and Public Health, work diligently in their efforts to assure a coordinated response to a wide range of emergency events. Adequate preparation by healthcare organizations, in collaboration with their community partners, is critical to safeguarding the lives of the residents and workers of Northern Virginia. Planning and pre-event coordination takes place under the auspices of the Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS), formerly Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), of which Northern Virginia hospitals are an integral part.

The Northern Virginia Hospital Alliance sets forth organizational and operational goals for coordinating and distributing resources in response to, and recovery from, any type of catastrophic disaster or large-scale emergency situation. These goals embrace the “all hazards” concept. Plans assign broad responsibilities to participating agencies and support organizations for disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. They also define the relationship between the hospitals and Regional Hospital Coordinating Centers (RHCC) to enhance and improve coordination and response capabilities of hospitals during an emergency or disaster within the region. The regional system is intended to be capable of a sustained response for a period of 72 hours without federal assistance and includes provisions for:

- Notifying hospitals and other healthcare facilities that an incident has occurred;
- Protecting hospitals and other healthcare facilities by sharing information regarding environmental or patient-source contamination;
- Obtaining pharmaceuticals and other medical equipment in a timely manner;
- Obtaining essential non-clinical supplies in a timely manner;
- Transferring and moving patients in a coordinated manner;
- Coordinating with local EMS incident command to manage the distribution of patients from the scene of an MCI to area hospitals;
- Coordinating with local and regional public health and emergency management to ensure ongoing situational awareness and information sharing; and,
- Management and distribution of regionally-stockpiled assets (ventilators, supplies, IV fluid, etc.).

While there are many partners in the Northern Region that play vital roles in the health and medical arena, NoVA hospitals have the primary responsibility for triaging, admitting and providing definitive medical care for patients affected by a disaster, including decontamination. NoVA hospitals coordinate facility support needs such as security and law-enforcement augmentation, food, fuel, and water through their local emergency management officials per facility-specific disaster plans. They also identify the need for additional staff, supplies, pharmaceuticals, and specialized equipment and expedite these resource requests through the Regional Healthcare Coordinating Center (RHCC). The 14 Hospitals in NoVA share, request, and provide medical resources as necessary via the RHCC. The hospitals will be responsible for informing the RHCC and jurisdictional Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) in a timely manner of any needs or changes in their operational abilities. Hospitals, in cooperation with the RHCC, will determine the appropriate distribution of patients – injured, infected, and psychologically affected – by considering real-time and projected in-patient surge capacity estimates. When an influx of patients threatens to overwhelm hospital resources, the hospital(s) will notify the RHCC (and their jurisdictional EOC, if appropriate) of the increased casualty numbers.